

The Informal Process

The CPUC has established an easy process to aid consumers with utility issues and complaints. Most consumers prefer this “informal” process because it is easier than the complex and time-consuming formal process. This brochure summarizes the three-step informal process to resolving an issue with a CPUC-regulated utility company. To obtain more in-depth information about how to submit an informal complaint, please visit the website www.cpuc.ca.gov/cab.

Also, read the *Filing a Formal Complaint & Alternative Dispute Resolution at the CPUC* brochure if you would like to learn more about filing a Formal Complaint and the Formal Process.



The CPUC helps consumers with disputes by requiring utility companies to provide good customer service and by providing consumers the opportunity to contact the CPUC directly if they require more assistance.

The CPUC's Consumer Affairs Branch

The California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) regulates privately-owned utilities that operate within California and their services. The CPUC's Consumer Affairs Branch (CAB) can assist you with resolving your service and billing issues.

The CAB interactive phone system provides a lot of information on a wide variety of topics and is available 24 hours a day. Also, through the CAB hotline number, you can receive assistance over the phone in the language of your choice.

The CPUC has regulatory authority over utilities, moving companies, limousines, airport shuttles, and charter buses. It also oversees all rail safety issues. For more information, access the CPUC's Consumer Information Center at: <http://consumers.cpuc.ca.gov>.

Visit CAB online!

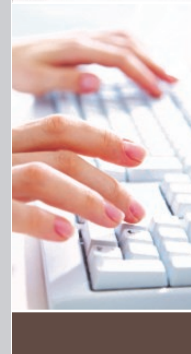
Visit Consumer Affairs Branch (CAB) online at www.cpuc.ca.gov/cab

Contact Information for the Consumer Affairs Branch

Online: www.cpuc.ca.gov/cab/
Toll-free: CAB Hotline (800) 649-7570

Mail: Consumer Affairs Branch
505 Van Ness Avenue
San Francisco, CA 94102

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Formal and Informal Resolution Series #1

Resolving an Issue with a Utility: The CPUC's Informal Process



www.cpuc.ca.gov



3 Easy Steps

Step 1. Contact Your Utility

Before submitting an informal complaint to the CPUC's Consumer Affairs Branch (CAB), please first give your utility an opportunity to resolve your complaint by calling the utility's customer service department, whose phone number is listed on your utility bill. The utility will usually resolve your complaint, but if you are dissatisfied with the resolution, you may move on to Step 2 and contact CAB.

When calling your utility, make sure to write down the representative's name, the date of the call, and what was discussed.

Resolving an Issue with a Regulated Utility

Step 2. Call the Consumer Affairs Branch

A CAB Representative will assist you, but before you call, have your utility bill handy and be ready to write down who you speak with and what is said. The CAB Representative will need some information to help you; so, the representative may ask for the following:

- The name the account is billed to.
- Your name, if different from the account holder's name.
- Account number (especially if it is an energy account).
- A phone number where you can be reached.
- Your address.
- Description of the dispute. It helps if you can provide the chronological order of what happened, such as the date of the charges and the date the charges were billed.

In most cases, the CAB Representative will connect you with a special office at your utility that helps consumers who contact the CPUC with informal complaints. The CAB and utility staff will assist you in resolving your dispute.

Step 3. Submit a Written Complaint

You may write to CAB if you disagree with the utility company's resolutions during Step 1 and Step 2. Also, if the complaint is too complex to handle with a phone call, a CAB Representative may ask you to write down your complaint and send it to CAB.

In your written complaint, please include the information requested in Step 2, copies of the bills showing the disputed charges, and any other related documents, such as copies of receipts for payment.

You can mail your complaint to the address on the back of this brochure or use the online form at www.cpuc.ca.gov/cab.

The CAB Representative will use this information to submit an informal complaint with your utility, and then, evaluate the utility's response in light of regulations and rates. Most cases are resolved within 90 days, and CAB will send you a letter advising you of the resolution it has reached regarding your issue.



California
Public Utilities
Commission

Consumer Affairs
Branch



Assisting Consumers With Utility Disputes

The Consumer Affairs Branch (CAB) of the CPUC can be the consumer's first option at the CPUC when seeking help with a utility dispute. CAB assists consumers and the utility company by providing a neutral evaluation of the dispute.

Appealing a Resolution

If you are not satisfied with the resolution of your informal complaint, there are still more options available through the appeal process, although they may become more complex and time-consuming. These two options are administered by the CPUC Administrative Law Judges:

1. Use the *Alternative Dispute Resolution* process, which is conducted by a judge.
2. File a *Formal Complaint* with the CPUC, which will be heard before a judge.